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DE RUEHGO #0710/01 1501035
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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4603
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 0898
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 9672
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 4168
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1624
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 3350
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 6768
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 4383
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL CALCUTTA 0757
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU 0758
RUDKIA/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 0420
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 2689
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0333
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 000710

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STATE FOR EAP/MLS; PACOM FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/25/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: ONE STEP FORWARD, TWO STEPS BACK: ASSK NOT RELEASED

REF: A. RANGOON 679

[1](#)B. RANGOON 530

[1](#)C. 05 RANGOON 1332

RANGOON 00000710 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: A/DCM W. Patrick Murphy for Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: On May 26, the Burmese regime extended the detention of Aung San Suu Kyi, re-sealed the street that runs in front of her Rangoon compound, and detained several supporters. ASSK thus began the fourth consecutive year of her current confinement. ASSK's NLD party issued a statement expressing sadness, calling her detention "invalid." The extension coincided with the 16th anniversary of the 1990 legislative election, an NLD victory which the regime has failed to implement. Although the extension surprised few local observers, opposition supporters expressed profound disappointment and sadness that the SPDC's top generals failed to respond to appeals issued by world leaders. By extending ASSK's house arrest, however, the regime has once again, as it has countless times over the past 18 years, shown its true colors. End Summary.

MESSAGE DELIVERED

[1](#)2. (U) The Burmese regime, thumbing its nose at appeals issued by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and numerous world leaders, re-extended the house detention of NLD General Secretary Aung San Suu Kyi on May 26 for at least another six

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months, possibly a full year. In keeping with past practice (ref C), the GOB did not issue an official statement. Foreign Minister Nyan Win, however, attending a Non-Aligned Movement meeting in Kuala Lumpur, acknowledged to reporters that the regime had extended her house arrest. ASSK thus began the fourth consecutive year of her current confinement, her third lengthy stint under house arrest since 1989.

¶3. (SBU) According to local sources, at least two representatives of Minister of Home Affairs Maj Gen Maung Oo visited ASSK on the evening of May 26 to inform her that her house arrest had been extended. GOB officials subsequently sealed off a quarter-mile stretch of University Avenue that runs in front of her lakeside Rangoon compound, erecting barricades and beefing up the presence of military and security personnel. As of COB May 30, the street, which authorities had reopened in 2005 to local traffic during daylight hours, remained closed.

THE OPPOSITION REACTS

¶4. (C) Throughout the day on May 27, reporters gathered on University Avenue in anticipation of ASSK's release. A handful of ASSK supporters also arrived, leading security officials to detain several individuals. Emboff witnessed a military convoy departing the area in the late afternoon, possibly escorting the detainees to a Rangoon security facility. According to NLD leaders, however, the party did not sanction the role of the supporters and the identify of the detainees is unknown to the NLD and other pro-democracy leaders.

¶5. (U) The NLD's Central Executive Committee met on May 27 and subsequently released a statement expressing "sadness to hear the news that the authorities have once again used (Section 10(b) of the Law Safeguarding the State from the Danger of Subversive Elements) to continue detaining ASSK." The CEC also stated that "the extension of her detention is not valid, since it cannot be shown that her release affects national security. The extension can (negatively) effect the efforts being made to achieve national reconciliation."

DEMOCRACY DENIED

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¶6. (U) At mid-day on May 27, Charge and A/DCM attended the NLD's previously scheduled commemoration of the 16th anniversary of the 1990 multi-party legislative election. Over 400 party members and supporters attended, as did representatives of the UN country team and the Australian, British, French, and German Embassies. In a lengthy statement that recounted the history of the 1990 election and various unsuccessful opposition efforts to convene the elected Parliament, the party called for the immediate and unconditional release of NLD leaders U Tin Oo and ASSK, as well as ethnic Shan democracy leaders Hkun Htun Oo and Sai Nyunt Lwin.

¶7. (U) In addition to traditional appeals for the re-opening of NLD offices and the restoration of basic rights, the NLD underscored the need for humanitarian assistance to "relieve social sufferings." Although the party did not reiterate the specifics of conciliatory dialogue proposals it issued in February and April (ref B), the NLD did acknowledge that a convened Parliament should "carry out the interests of the whole people, including defense service personnel."

¶8. (SBU) The NLD gave more attention than usual to ethnic minorities at the anniversary commemoration. Several pro-democracy ethnic leaders gave fiery speeches appealing for the convening of the elected Parliament. In his Chairman's address, NLD leader U Aung Shwe observed that not only NLD members, who won over 80 percent of the legislative seats in 1990, have Parliamentary rights, but also the "elected political parties of the ethnic nationalities." U Aung Shwe also recalled images of poor villagers attending campaign speeches in 1990, "despite blazing sun and choking dirt." These same villagers, he said, plodded through the monsoon mud on election day to cast ballots, because "they wanted to see a Parliament formed according to their will."

COMMENT: NO GAIN AND NO PAIN

¶9. (C) Despite a lack of any concrete evidence that SPDC leaders intended to alter the status quo of ASSK's detention, a ground swell of wishful thinking and high-profile appeals outside the country over the past week increased international speculation that the pro-democracy leader would regain her freedom. These rumors, combined with the UN Secretary General's direct appeal for her release, gave some

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hope to beleaguered oppositions forces. While not surprised by the extension, NLD and other opposition supporters expressed to us profound disappointment and sadness that the SPDC's top generals failed to respond to the appeals issued by world leaders.

¶10. (C) By extending ASSK's house arrest, however, the regime has once again, as it has countless times over the past 18 years, shown its true colors. The generals do not respond to either pressure or coddling, but rather act only in their self interest. SPDC Chairman Than Shwe sees no gain in releasing ASSK, and no particular pain in keeping her detained.

¶11. (C) Our challenge will be in finding the right mix of carrots and sticks to which the generals will respond. They were willing to open sufficiently to permit U/SYG Gambari's visit a week earlier (ref A). We continue to view the UN as the best interlocutor to push for greater openness and dialogue leading to genuine national reconciliation. The harsh international reaction to the detention extension, even from neighbors less inclined to criticism, should strengthen the UN's hand in pressing for more change by the regime. What the generals do crave is international legitimacy, and the events of this weekend should remind all that they are not the legitimate leaders of Burma. End Comment.
VILLAROSA